United Nations A/60/447

General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 October 2005
English
Original: Spanish

Sixtieth session
Agenda items 13, 18, 21, 22, 43, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 64, 68, 73 and 108

The situation in Central America: progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti

Culture of peace

Macroeconomic policy questions

Sustainable development

Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

Globalization and interdependence

Groups of countries in special situations

Advancement of women

Indigenous issues

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 21 October 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Salamanca Declaration (see annex), together with an appendix and a number of special communiqués, adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American community of nations at the Summit held in Salamanca, Spain, on 14 and 15 October 2005.

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I should be grateful if you would have the aforementioned texts circulated as a document of the General Assembly under items 13, 18, 21, 22, 43, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 64, 68, 73 and 108, of the agenda of the sixtieth session.

(*Signed*) Juan Antonio **Yañez-Barnuevo**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 21 October 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Salamanca Declaration

1. We, the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American community of nations, gathered for the Fifteenth Summit in Salamanca, Spain, on 14 and 15 October 2005, reaffirm the entire Ibero-American heritage, which consists of the values, principles and agreements that we have adopted at previous Summits. It is based on the recognition of the full validity of the Charter of the United Nations and our commitment to the purposes and principles embodied therein, our respect for international law, the deepening of democracy, development, the universal promotion and protection of human rights, the strengthening of multilateralism and cooperative relations among all peoples and nations and the rejection of coercive unilateral measures that contravene international law.

2. We welcome Andorra as a new member that fully shares the identity and fulfils the criteria for membership of the Summit system. Andorra will be represented at Summits by its Head of Government.

3. We decide to establish the Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB) as a permanent organ to support the institutionalization of the Ibero-American Conference, and we congratulate its first Secretary-General, Enrique V. Iglesias. We entrust the Secretariat with the pursuit of the objectives set out in the Agreement of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, which are designed to strengthen Ibero-American cooperation, internal cohesion and the promotion of the Ibero-American community of nations at the international level. We endorse the work programme of SEGIB as proposed by the Secretary-General, which will be supplemented by actions that we have agreed to entrust to it during our meetings.

4. We reaffirm the commitment of the Ibero-American community to international law and effective multilateralism, to which we wish to make a meaningful contribution. We undertake to lend active support to a far-reaching reform of the United Nations system which, on the basis of the principles of efficiency, participation, transparency, representativeness, equal sovereignty and democratization, will strengthen its role in the prevention of threats, the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of economic and social development. In that connection, we acknowledge the work of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the occasion of the Organization's sixtieth anniversary.

5. Following a videoconference with the Presidents of Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua during our first meeting, we express our profound sadness at the terrible loss of life caused by Hurricane Stan.

We stress the need for a united response and our desire to reduce the vulnerability of Central America and to promote the process of reconstruction and transformation in that region.

6. Democracy is a unifying factor in Ibero-America. We believe that we must develop an Ibero-American agenda that reinforces the quality of our democracies and their capacity to respond to citizens' expectations in terms of protecting their rights and meeting their social and economic needs. In that regard, the most pressing

priority is to achieve sustainable development and address the challenges posed by poverty and inequality. Accordingly, efforts must be made to strengthen institutions and to design and implement social inclusion policies that focus on education and the right of all citizens to work in dignified conditions and in an environment of rising productivity and which will contribute to reducing infant mortality and chronic malnutrition and ensuring universal access to health services.

To that end, and within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals and after having studied the social, economic and political situations of our countries, we call on SEGIB to pursue the following agreed courses of action:

(a) To support the various initiatives designed to eradicate hunger and poverty;

(b) To encourage, both within the Ibero-American community and in third countries, debt-for-education swaps and other social investments;

(c) To establish a permanent dialogue on investment, the expansion of the entrepreneurial base and access to credit and technical assistance;

(d) To coordinate activities with a view to broadening international cooperation, including cooperation with middle-income countries, and eliminating the imbalances in the international financial and trade regime, as well as the external debt burden;

(e) To assist countries in dealing with the effects of changes in the energy market and, in that context, to hold a special meeting on renewable energy sources;

(f) To encourage cooperation programmes in the health sector which will help to combat pandemics and curable diseases;

(g) To support the consolidation of the Ibero-American Judicial Cooperation Network in order, inter alia, to improve measures to deal with drug trafficking, corruption and transnational organized crime;

(h) To prepare a study that will take account of the existing differences within the Ibero-American community with a view to applying the principle of solidarity in order to rectify current imbalances;

(i) To follow up the initiative of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela concerning the establishment of a humanitarian fund.

7. Migration, which affects us all, as societies of origin, transit or destination, is an increasingly intense, diverse and complex global phenomenon which has an impact on the political, economic, social and cultural make-up of our societies. It also poses challenges relating to the recognition and acceptance of diversity, social and economic integration, the development of human capital and the treatment of remittances so as to ensure that they stimulate productivity and positive change in the countries that receive them, thereby facilitating the return of migrants. In some Ibero-American countries, indigenous and Afro-descendant people account for a significant proportion of the groups concerned. The successful management of this complex phenomenon is linked to our ability to design a framework for Ibero-American migration which is based on the orderly channelling and intelligent regularization of migratory flows, cooperation in the fight against trafficking and trade in human beings and, in addition, the responsibility of each country to design relevant public policies. In view of the foregoing, we undertake to:

(a) Coordinate common policies to channel and manage migratory flows in an orderly fashion;

(b) Develop, with the support of civil society, a programme of public activities to promote respect for the human rights of migrants and their families, their integration and respect for their rights in their countries of destination;

(c) Promote diversity and respect for human dignity, within the framework of the rule of law, as essential considerations in the treatment of emigrants, and eliminate all forms of discrimination against them;

(d) Promote development models that link immigrants and their families with efforts to step up development in their regions of origin;

(e) Involve countries of origin, transit and destination in the development of joint policies that also favour and facilitate temporary migration for employment purposes and incorporate adequate incentives for promotion, training and savings to ensure that the individuals concerned return with better prospects.

To move towards the achievement of these objectives, we request SEGIB to prepare and convene an Ibero-American meeting on migration, which will take place before the next Ibero-American Summit and which, in conjunction with the Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS) and with the support of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, will support the process of the preparation and signing of an Ibero-American convention on social security.

8. The diversity, scope and biregional nature of the Ibero-American community mean that it is capable of becoming an active player on the international stage. We are aware of the need to strengthen our mechanisms for dialogue and coordination in order to harness that potential. We consider that the effective participation of our countries in active multilateralism will contribute to security, peace, development and the protection of international law.

In view of the foregoing, we have decided that SEGIB should:

(a) Follow up on the steps taken to grant the Ibero-American Conference observer status with the United Nations;

(b) Study the possibilities for cooperation between the Ibero-American Conference and other international organizations whose work relates to the development and consolidation of the Ibero-American region by strengthening, in particular, the work undertaken in collaboration with other Ibero-American organizations, and submit specific proposals to that end to the relevant bodies of the Ibero-American Conference;

(c) Take steps to establish a formal link between the Ibero-American Conference and the Alliance of Civilizations initiative;

(d) Support regional and subregional integration processes and promote the negotiations on agreements with the European Union;

(e) Participate in the preparation of the next European Union-Latin America and Caribbean summit, which is to be held in Vienna in 2006;

(f) Support the process of aligning the positions of the Ibero-American countries in international trade negotiations.

9. We have been notified of the outcome of the Ibero-American Parliamentary Forum, which represents a valuable input to the work of the Summit by the representatives of Ibero-American citizens. The Forum will make a significant contribution to the consolidation of the Ibero-American community of nations.

10. We take note of the conclusions of the business meeting and the civil society meeting, namely that those forums should continue to be held within the framework of the Ibero-American Summits, and we emphasize the convergence of their work in four main areas: the institutional framework as the guarantor of democratic governance and the protection of human rights; the importance of investment for development and its promotion within a framework of legal security and environmental and social responsibility; the need to link official development cooperation to poverty reduction strategies and the Millennium Development Goals while taking account of the situation in middle-income countries; and the desire of the Ibero-American community to support regional and subregional integration processes and play a part in negotiations for a more open, just and equitable global trade regime.

We entrust the Ibero-American Secretary-General with the task of following up on the recommendations of those bodies.

11. We support the conclusions of the ministerial and sectoral meetings of the Ibero-American Conference, which dealt with issues relating to public administration and State reform, housing and urban planning, tourism, agriculture and childhood, and the other meetings which have contributed to the adoption of the decisions contained in a number of the following paragraphs.

12. With a view to increasing investment to promote social inclusion and contributing to the relief of external debt in Latin America, and in the context of the search for innovative mechanisms, we undertake to encourage as many bilateral and multilateral creditors as possible to swap debt for social investment, particularly in the area of education.

In that connection, we undertake to continue the discussion process with a view to the adoption of an Ibero-American education pact, along the lines of the Toledo Declaration, in order to promote equitable development and social justice.

13. We intend to pursue the establishment of an Ibero-American knowledge base, geared towards the changes necessary in the area of higher education and focused on research, development and innovation, which are prerequisites for increasing productivity by ensuring that our populations have improved access to better quality goods and services as well as for enhancing the competitiveness of our region at the international level. To that end, we call on the Ibero-American Secretariat to work together with the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI) and the Ibero-American University Council (CUIB) to achieve the political and technical coordination necessary to implement this project.

The knowledge base should include research on regional plans and the exchange of experience in the area of literacy with a view to achieving universal primary education. To that end, we instruct SEGIB, taking as a starting point the current experience in the region, to submit to member States an Ibero-American literacy plan with the aim of declaring the Ibero-American region an "area free of illiteracy" at some point between 2008 and 2015.

14. We decide to prepare, in the light of the basis set out in the annex to this Declaration and other elements pertaining to the cultural life of our countries, an Ibero-American Cultural Charter which, from the perspective of the diversity of our cultural expression, will contribute to the consolidation of the Ibero-American region, the integral development of human beings and the eradication of poverty.

15. We will also create a fund, financed through voluntary contributions from member States, to promote the joint production of high-quality cultural television programmes, as well as training for professionals.

16. We agree to promote practical action and initiatives to guarantee the universalization of the right to health, placing that objective at the heart of the political agendas of our countries and of Ibero-American cooperation. To that end, we decide to set up Ibero-American cooperation networks on organ donations and transplants, policies relating to medicinal products, the fight against smoking, and teaching and research in the field of public health.

17. We have decided to begin the process of drafting an Ibero-American convention on social security, with a view to ensuring that migrant workers and their families enjoy social security rights.

18. The Ibero-American Organization for Young People was given the task of preparing a plan of cooperation and integration for young people to safeguard and promote the rights of young people and strengthen integration among the new generation of Ibero-Americans.

We welcome the adoption by 17 member States of the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Young People, which should contribute to the strengthening of public policies designed to protect the rights of young people.

19. We note the urgent need for new technologies, better resources and new methods for the integrated management of water resources, the adaptation to climate change and the management of waste. We also recognize the importance for the region of promoting the sustainable use of our natural resources, the development of renewable sources of energy and the role of the clean development mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol as a tool to facilitate cooperation between the parties. We express our willingness to incorporate these issues into regional development policies.

20. We draw attention to the actions and the outcome of the meeting of Ibero-American Ministers of Transport and Infrastructure, in particular the coordination of existing training and capacity-building programmes in that area, and we urge the Ministers to continue working together on the important issues of infrastructure and transport.

21. We highlight the progress made in coordinating and managing the Ibero-American Network of Ministers from the Office of the President and their Counterparts and also in developing a strategic information system for Heads of Government, as well as the measures to strengthen the Ibero-American School of Government and Public Policy (IBERGOP) adopted at the ninth meeting of Ministers from the Office of the President and their Counterparts.

22. We highlight the importance of the regulations governing the composition, powers and functioning of the Ibero-American Judicial Cooperation Network in the definition and consolidation of an Ibero-American area of justice.

23. We reaffirm our commitment to create favourable conditions for the creation of more and better jobs. To that end, we accord a central place on the Ibero-American agenda to decent employment, which is a human right, because of its significant contribution to economic and social development and as a way of promoting a more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth, thereby promoting social inclusion, respect for workers' rights and an improvement in the standard of living of our populations.

24. We appreciate the position on official development assistance to middle-income countries set out in the declaration of the High-level Meeting of Heads of State of the United Nations and we entrust SEGIB with the task of following up on that issue by providing more detailed description and treatment of the various levels of human development, with particular emphasis on the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

25. We are committed to recognizing, promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, and we therefore reiterate our support for the strengthening of the Indigenous Fund. The experience with the Fund will, inter alia, be useful to SEGIB in its cooperation activities. The Secretariat will incorporate the perspective of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples into its cooperation activities and will take steps to mainstream a gender perspective into Ibero-American cooperation through relevant actions and projects.

26. We welcome the decision of Brazil to offer Spanish as a compulsory subject in its national secondary curriculum. This measure will make a positive contribution to Latin American and South American integration processes and will also promote the consolidation of the Ibero-American region. We also declare our willingness to support the more widespread use of Portuguese in Spanish-speaking Ibero-American countries.

27. We gratefully accept the offer of the Government of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay to host the Sixteenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2006.

28. We also gratefully accept the offer of the Government of the Republic of Chile to host the Seventeenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2007.

29. We welcome the Argentine Republic's offer to host the 2010 Ibero-American Summit in the city of Buenos Aires. That year will be doubly symbolic, since the city of Buenos Aires and the Argentine Republic will be celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the first national Government on the banks of the Plata and the Ibero-American Summit will be holding its twentieth meeting. The offer is therefore even more meaningful, and will be given due consideration by member States at the appropriate time.

30. We welcome the offer of the city of Cádiz to host the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2012, which will coincide with the city's commemoration of the adoption of the first Spanish Constitution in Cádiz in 1812. Member States will take a decision on that issue at the appropriate time in accordance with established procedures.

31. We, the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American community of nations express our thanks to Spain, its Government, the city of Salamanca and its University for their warm welcome during this Fifteenth Summit. We express our sincere congratulations to His Majesty King Juan Carlos I on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of his accession to the Spanish throne.

The Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American countries hereby sign this Declaration, in two original versions in the Spanish and Portuguese languages, both texts being equally authentic, at Salamanca on 15 October 2005.

Appendix

Basis for an Ibero-American Cultural Charter

We, the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American countries, bearing in mind the conclusions of the Eighth Ibero-American Cultural Conference, held in Cordoba, Spain, have agreed, within a framework of solidarity and cooperation, to proceed with the preparation of an Ibero-American Cultural Charter placing priority, among its areas of application, on cultural rights, the cultural and natural, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, cultural industries and links between culture and development, education and training, innovation, the economy, employment, the environment, tourism, science, technology and communications media, and incorporating the following principles and objectives:

- Affirmation of the core value of culture as an essential foundation for the all-around development of the human individual and for the social cohesion of the Ibero-American peoples;
- Promotion of an inclusive cultural development that contributes to overcoming poverty and inequality;
- Promotion and protection of Ibero-American cultural identities including, in particular, those of indigenous and Afro-descendant population groups and the range of languages and traditions that constitute and enrich them, as well as their creative capacities;
- Stimulation of intercultural dialogue between the cultures of Ibero-America and other cultures of the world;
- Fostering the protection and dissemination of the Ibero-American cultural and natural, tangible and intangible cultural heritage;
- Encouragement and protection of intellectual output represented by scientific and cultural works, in the belief that creative individuals and entities have the ability to instigate the development and well-being of nations;
- Enhancement, in the educational systems of the region, of knowledge and appreciation of the history and cultural diversity of Ibero-America;
- Adoption of measures with a view to increasing cultural diversity in the communications media of our countries;
- Recognition of the high value of the contribution made by migrants to cultural diversity in our countries;
- Strengthening the cultural industries of our countries through economic support and fostering the production of cultural content and of distribution networks for cultural activities, goods and services in our cultural area, with special emphasis during the present year, which is the Ibero-American Year of Reading, on the promotion of books and reading;
- Facilitating agreements for the co-production and co-distribution of cultural activities, goods and services between our countries, particularly in the audio-visual area, in the fields of cinema and television;

- Enhancing respect for, and the maintenance and protection of, the knowledge, innovations and practices of traditional, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities and the equitable distribution of the profits arising from their utilization;

- Facilitating Ibero-American dialogue and cooperation on cultural policies and supporting partnerships between the public and private sectors in favour of the diversity of cultural expressions;

- Promotion of participation in civil society, recognizing its essential role in strengthening Ibero-American culture through the establishment of policymaking and institutional procedures that facilitate such participation in all its manifestations;

- Promotion of the interchange of successful experience in the training and management of public sector cultural policies, as well as the utilization of new technologies and information exchanges that strengthen the cultural sectors of our countries.

Enclosure

Special communiqués

- Special communiqué on the damage caused by Hurricane Stan
- Special communiqué on the question of the Malvinas Islands
- Special communiqué on the integration process in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Special communiqué on support for negotiations between the European Union and Central America and the Andean Community
- Special communiqué on the dissemination and promotion of Ibero-American expressions
- Special communiqué on Haiti
- Special communiqué in support of literacy projects to achieve universal primary education
- Special communiqué in support of strengthening the democratic process in Bolivia
- Special communiqué on Colombia
- Special communiqué on the swapping of foreign debt for investment in education
- Special communiqué on violence against women and gender equity
- Special communiqué on support and cooperation for middle-income countries to promote their development and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals
- Special communiqué on the situation in Nicaragua
- Special communiqué on the "Water for Life" initiative
- Special communiqué in support of counter-terrorism
- Special communiqué on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, including the application of the so-called Helms-Burton Act

Special communiqué on the damage caused by Hurricane Stan

We, the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American countries, support the people and Governments of Mexico and the Central American countries affected by Hurricane Stan, in particular, Guatemala and El Salvador, and deeply regret the serious human and material damage caused by that natural disaster.

Accordingly, we undertake to continue to increase the emergency cooperation granted hitherto and to give our firm support to the activities aimed at the reconstruction and development of the affected areas in those countries.

We likewise appeal to the international community to associate itself with those objectives.

We agree to launch coordination machinery to facilitate an effective response to natural disasters in the region and we entrust the Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB) with the task of submitting a proposal taking into account existing experience.

Special communiqué on the question of the Malvinas Islands

We, the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American countries, meeting in Salamanca, Spain, on the occasion of the Fifteenth Ibero-American Summit, reaffirm the need for the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to renew negotiations as soon as possible with a view to finding an early resolution to the sovereignty dispute relating to the Malvinas Islands in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the principle of territorial integrity.

Special communiqué on the integration process in Latin America and the Caribbean

Recognizing the urgent need to further the processes of economic cooperation and integration between the countries of the region with the objective of developing societies that are increasingly just, united and equitable and in which the fullest realization of human potential and comprehensive care for the needs of the human individual are the motivation and guiding principle of our efforts,

We welcome the important ongoing initiatives and processes for extending the cooperation and integration of the development efforts of the region, in particular in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, facilitated, among other factors, by a common history and heritage, concordant political, economic and social values and interests, in particular the commitment to poverty reduction and the promotion of sustainable development and democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We welcome, in particular, the progress based on the integration agreements in force within the framework of ALADI for the strengthening of MERCOSUR, the Andean Community of Nations and the IIRSA Initiative; in the framework of SICA, the Puebla-Panama Plan (PPP) and CARICOM, as well as the establishment in December 2004 of the South American Community of Nations as areas of political cooperation and consultation and for the promotion of regional integration.

We applaud the efforts being made to promote and strengthen the energy integration of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and, in that context, we acknowledge the progress of what is known as the PetroCaribe Initiative, the San José Agreement, the agreement on the Southern Gas Pipeline Network Project, and the Electricity Interconnection System for the Countries of Central America (SIEPAC) with Mexico.

We reaffirm that, for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, integration is an essential precondition for true development, and we emphasize that only integration based on cooperation, solidarity and a common desire to advance together to higher standards of progress and well-being for all will be able to meet the needs and wishes of the Latin American and Caribbean people to reinforce recognition of and respect for their identity, heritage and independence.

Special communiqué on support for negotiations between the European Union and Central America and the Andean Community

The Heads of State of the countries of Ibero-America, recalling:

- The Joint Declaration of Intentions on development and the strengthening of relations with the countries of Latin America, adopted in 1985 on the occasion of the accession by Spain and Portugal to the European Union;
- Resolutions 2000/2249 and 2002/2044 of the European Parliament;
- The final reports of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth European Union-Latin America Interparliamentary Conference, held in Brussels in May 2003, and in Lima in June 2005;
- The Declaration of the European Union-Latin America Interparliamentary Conference, Puebla, March 2004; and
- The undertakings made at the Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, held in Guadalajara in May 2004 and reaffirmed by the joint commissions of the Andean Community and the European Union and of the European Union and the Central American Integration System in January 2005.

Express their support for the negotiations between the European Union and the Andean Community and Central America, including the joint evaluation working groups which will consider the optimal requirements to which the member States comprising those economic blocs aspire, and indicate that the conclusion of agreements of association between the European Union and the Andean Community and Central America, including a free trade zone, is a joint strategic objective in accordance with which they undertake to make every effort to launch negotiations during the Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, in Vienna, in May 2006.

Special communiqué on the dissemination and promotion of Ibero-American expressions

We request the Secretary-General to incorporate into the Secretariat's programme of work an analysis of the experience of television broadcasting in the various countries of the Ibero-American community, with a view to preparing proposals on cooperation for the dissemination and promotion of expressions of its artistic, educational, scientific and social life.

Special communiqué on Haiti

In view of our commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Haiti and in a spirit of solidarity with the Haitian people, we support the full implementation of the mandates of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), to which several Ibero-American countries contribute, and we are firmly in favour of completing the process of democratic normalization in Haiti and holding inclusive, free, impartial, transparent and democratic elections. We trust that the date of 7 February 2006 set for the transfer of the powers of the Provisional Government to the new democratically elected authorities will be adhered to.

In the light of the difficult economic, political and social situation in Haiti, we reaffirm the priority which the countries of the Ibero-American community attach to Haiti's reconstruction and development, to which we also contribute. We call for the effective implementation of the commitments entered into in terms of international cooperation to support the national efforts and priorities of the Government of Haiti, which we hope will continue after the elections are held.

The Ibero-American Conference will encourage and back the bilateral, triangular and regional cooperation work of Ibero-American countries with Haiti.

Against this background we request the Ibero-American Secretary-General to carry out a mission to Haiti to assess the situation, support the local authorities and, in conjunction with the United Nations and other international bodies involved, encourage the authorities to hold the elections as planned. At the same time the Secretary-General should evaluate the situation with regard to international cooperation with a view to making recommendations for the improvement of the inputs of the Ibero-American countries.

Special communiqué in support of literacy projects to achieve universal primary education

At our Fifteenth Summit, held in Salamanca on 14 and 15 October 2005, we the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American countries reaffirm the importance of devising literacy programmes, plans and projects to strengthen education systems, including in our own countries, with emphasis on early childhood, illiterate persons and persons with little schooling, and the disabled, as well as the need to formulate projects to improve primary education to the maximum extent possible.

Accordingly, we support the national and regional projects on literacy methods which have an impact on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and of the objectives of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade.

We commend the people and Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the success of their National Literacy Plan, as a result of which Venezuela will be declared, on 28 October next, a land free of illiteracy.

Special communiqué in support of strengthening the democratic process in Bolivia

The Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American countries, on the occasion of their Fifteenth Summit, held in Salamanca, Spain, declare their appreciation and support of the efforts of the Bolivian people and the Government headed by President Eduardo Rodríquez Veltzé as significant contributions to democracy in their country, to civil peace, and to dialogue as an effective tool for securing democratic participation and institutional continuity. This will make it possible to maintain both a State governed by the rule of law and Bolivia's social and political stability.

We urge all of Bolivia's social and political actors to make an effective contribution to the attainment of these goals so that the election timetable established in the national accords will remain unchanged, as a guarantee of the continuity and reinforcement of the democratic process in Bolivia.

Special communiqué on Colombia

The Heads of State and Government of the countries members of the Ibero-American Conference, at their Fifteenth Summit, held in Salamanca on 14 and 15 October 2005, expressed their appreciation and support for the peace efforts under way in Colombia. They welcomed the ongoing collective and individual demobilization and the disarmament of more than 18,600 members of illegal armed groups which commit terrorist acts and acknowledged the contribution of the support mission of the Organization of American States (OAS). They also stressed the importance of the reintegration process and of support for the communities where demobilization has taken place, with a view to establishing a sustainable peace process within a framework of strict respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

The Heads of State and Government recognized that the success of the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process will require the backing of the international community.

Against this background they expressed their interest in supporting the OAS mission to enable it to carry out its mandate in full and they invited the countries members of the Ibero-American Conference, as appropriate, to study ways of giving effect to such support.

Special communiqué on the swapping of external debt for investment in education

Being aware of the urgent need to alleviate the serious external debt problem affecting many of the countries of the region, we are in favour of exploring the possibility of devising projects on swapping external debt for investment in education as a means of supporting our efforts to improve education in the context of our countries' development and of helping to attain the relevant Millennium Development Goals.

We reaffirm our commitment, stated at the Fourteenth Summit of the Heads of State and Government, to boost the funding of education by securing additional budgetary resources and making more effective use of existing resources and to strengthen to this end the dialogue between the political, education and financial sectors.

We welcome in particular the projects on swapping external debt for investment in education and other social investment initiated in several Ibero-American countries and we undertake to draw to the attention of other bilateral and multilateral creditors the usefulness of this tool and the desirability of its inclusion in their respective agendas.

We record our satisfaction with the efforts of the Ibero-American Secretariat and OEI to accelerate the establishment of arrangements for the consideration of a draft Ibero-American agreement on education.

Special communiqué on violence against women and gender equity

Violence against women is a serious infringement of human rights and constitutes one of the most flagrant manifestations of the feminization of poverty.

We therefore undertake to promote policies which will help to eradicate violence against women and guarantee the full enjoyment of women's fundamental rights and freedoms.

We will give priority in our agenda to the promotion of policies with a gender perspective and consolidate legal measures to ensure women's economic, political and social empowerment, for we are convinced that greater equity will contribute to the building of more democratic and fairer societies.

Special Communiqué on support and cooperation for middle-income countries to promote their development and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals

We recognize and affirm the importance and necessity of international cooperation for the sustainable development of lower-middle-income countries, to complement national efforts for carrying out national priority programmes and fulfilling commitments to implement the Millennium Development Goals.

We emphasize the importance of adopting new measures and mechanisms to allow these countries to overcome serious obstacles to development, which may include, among other things, the consideration of new assistance programmes, no exclusion from or reduction of bilateral and multilateral financial assistance or development assistance indicators, the creation of special emergency funds and debt conversion for development cooperation, particularly with regard, inter alia, to health, housing, energy and environmental protection; we emphasize, in particular, debt swap for education programmes promoted by Spain, within the context of implementing innovative financial mechanisms for development.

Special communiqué on the situation in Nicaragua

We, the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American countries, meeting in Salamanca, Spain, on the occasion of the Fifteenth Ibero-American Summit, bearing in mind the importance of respect for the political, institutional and democratic process as well as the legitimate exercise of power in Nicaragua, including the restoration of the balance of powers of the State, declare that the intensification of the institutional and political crisis in Nicaragua jeopardizes the democratic governance of the country, the legitimate exercise of power and the rule of law, with serious social and economic consequences, both present and future, for the people of Nicaragua, and we therefore exhort all parties concerned to conduct a broad-based, constructive dialogue, free of pressures or threats, under conditions of equality, including the suspension of the measures that have provoked the escalation of the institutional crisis, and to respect the mandate freely conferred by the Nicaraguan people upon President Enrique Bolaños and other elected officials.

We proclaim the importance of taking action to maintain democratic institutions and to reach agreements that will preserve the functioning of the rule of law and the stability of the country. Furthermore, we urge the immediate cessation of any action that may exacerbate the political crisis in Nicaragua.

We endorse regional actions and efforts to bring about a broad, inclusive national dialogue that will make it possible to find democratic solutions and to ensure genuine compliance with the agreements reached.

Special communiqué on the "Water for Life" initiative

We recognize the importance of making decisive progress towards the implementation of the Latin American component of the European Water Initiative and declare our interest in strengthening our ties of cooperation.

We therefore call on the competent Ministries of our countries to move ahead with the formulation of a plan of action — following up on earlier efforts — a central thrust of which will be the comprehensive management of water resources.

We hope that on the occasion of the Fourth World Water Forum to be held in Mexico in 2006, an agreement can be reached with the European Union for the implementation of the Latin American component.

Special communiqué in support of counter-terrorism

We reaffirm our commitment to combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, in strict conformity with international law, international human rights protection standards and international humanitarian law, and shall, inter alia, strengthen our national laws and promote active and effective international cooperation to prevent, repress and eliminate all manifestations of this scourge. Moreover, we pledge to take measures to prevent and eliminate the financing of and preparation for any terrorist act and to refuse to shelter instigators, financers, perpetrators, and promoters of and participants in terrorist activities, in conformity with the international legal framework, including the corresponding international conventions and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations.

We reaffirm the need for those who commit terrorist acts not to be given impunity and urge all States, in conformity with the obligations imposed on them by international law, to cooperate fully in combating terrorism, especially with those in whose territory or against whose citizens terrorist acts are committed, with a view to locating, capturing, refusing to shelter, and prosecuting, on the basis of the principle of aut dedere aut judicare, those who support or facilitate the financing, planning, preparation or commission of terrorist acts or the provision of safe havens, and those who participate in or intend to participate in such acts.

We express our solidarity with the victims and the families of the victims of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, wherever such acts have occurred and regardless of who has participated in or committed them, or, of who has sponsored or funded them, or of the motives given as a pretext for such crimes.

We urge all States to ensure, in conformity with international law, that refugee status or asylum is not used in an illegitimate manner by those who finance, perpetrate, organize or sponsor terrorist acts, and that claims of political motivation are not used to justify the denial of requests for the extradition of alleged terrorists.

We reaffirm the Special Communiqué on terrorism adopted at the Fourteenth Ibero-American Summit and support efforts to extradite or prosecute the perpetrator of the terrorist attack on a Cubana de Aviación aircraft in October 1976, which caused the death of 73 innocent civilians.

We reaffirm the value of extradition as an essential tool in combating terrorism, and urge those States that have received requests for the extradition of terrorists made by States members of our Community to give them due consideration in strict adherence to the applicable legal framework.

We call on all States that have not yet done so urgently to consider becoming parties to all conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, with a view to fulfilling all obligations thereunder, as well as all international agreements which require them to provide judicial assistance and promptly and appropriately to prosecute and punish those who finance, sponsor, participate in or commit terrorist acts, with strict adherence to international law and with respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, in particular such acts committed against means of public transport of goods or passengers, against members of diplomatic missions, or against tourist facilities or other public facilities.

We request States to cooperate within the framework of the United Nations, in resolving any pending issues with a view to the adoption of an international counter-terrorism convention of the broadest scope.

Special Communiqué on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, including the application of the so-called Helms-Burton Act

In view of the references to this topic in the Declarations adopted at previous Summits of Heads of State and Government of Ibero-America.

We once again reaffirm that, in defence of free exchange and transparent practice in international trade, the application of coercive unilateral measures that affect the well-being of populations and obstruct integration processes is unacceptable.

We vigorously protest the implementation of laws and measures in contravention of international law, such as the Helms-Burton Act, and we urge the Government of the United States of America to cease implementing it.

We request the Government of the United States of America to comply with the provisions of 13 successive resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and to end its economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba.

We ask the Government of the United States of America to cease immediately the implementation of measures adopted over the past two years with a view to strengthening and deepening the impact of its economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba.